REPORT
OF THE
WORLD FOOD COUNCIL
on the work of its seventeenth session

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5 - 8 June 1991

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

SUPPLEMENT No. 19 (A/46/19)

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NOTE

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EEC	European Economic Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFC	World Food Council
WFP	World Food Programme

PART ONE

MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORLD FOOD COUNCIL
AT ITS SEVENTEENTH MINISTERIAL SESSION

1. We, the ministers and plenipotentiaries of the World Food Council, met for our seventeenth session in Helsingor, Denmark, from 5 to 8 June 1991, under the Presidency of Mr. Andreas Gavrielides, Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources of Cyprus, and Vice-President of the Council, in the absence of the President, Mr. Youssef Amin Wally, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt. Meeting at a time of great political, economic and social changes in many parts of the world, we considered the likely consequences of these changes for the poor and hungry, and necessary remedial action. We also considered important longer-term issues concerning the food security of future generations. But, above all, we met to reaffirm, in these rapidly changing and difficult times, the primacy of food and hunger issues on the global agenda for the 1990s.

2. We have been especially aware of the difficulties confronting the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe. We express our full solidarity and continued support with their courageous efforts to bring about political and economic reform. At the same time, developed country members confirm their unequivocal commitment and continued support to the developing countries' efforts towards development firmly based on the alleviation of hunger and poverty.

Translating consensus into action

3. We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation of hunger and malnutrition in the world. Some 45 million people - 30 million of them in Africa - are threatened by famine, many of them refugees displaced by war and civil strife. Rarely has there been such an extensive combination of man-made and natural disasters as we are experiencing this year. Among the millions of people afflicted by natural disasters are the survivors of the deadly cyclones which struck the people of Bangladesh in recent weeks. To them and all others facing the scourge of famine, we pledge our support.

4. The plight of the millions of people affected by disasters is a forceful reminder of the need for strengthening early warning systems and disaster preparedness, where possible, and for improving the efficiency of humanitarian assistance. The Council will continue working towards more effective measures to ensure the safe passage of emergency food aid to people affected by civil strife.

5. Less visible, but no less tragic is the continuing crisis of chronic hunger and malnutrition affecting a growing number of men, women and children around the world. In developing countries, one out of three children under the age of five is malnourished. Malnutrition and common, preventable diseases kill 40,000 of them each day. The lives of millions of people are impaired by such easily treatable nutritional-deficiency diseases as vitamin-A deficiency, iodine-deficiency disorders and iron-deficiency anaemia. Given prospective economic developments, it would appear that without special efforts a substantial increase in the number of hungry and malnourished people in sub-Saharan Africa would be inevitable in the 1990s. In Latin America and the Caribbean, even a small reduction in the number of hungry people may be

difficult to achieve during the present decade. In Asia, a reduction of hunger will, to a large extent, depend on developments in South Asia, where the economic outlook is full of uncertainty. These prospects are together an affront to humanity and we must not allow them to become a reality.

6. At Cairo two years ago, we agreed on four global goals to address the problems of famines, chronic hunger, malnutrition and nutritional deficiency diseases in the 1990s. 1/ We are encouraged by the adoption by all States Members of the United Nations of these goals as an integral part of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. 2/ We, therefore, commit ourselves to see to it that the representatives of our Governments in all international organizations, make efforts so that the objectives of the Strategy, as adopted at the forty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, be attained.

7. Our session held at Bangkok last year demonstrated that there is broad consensus on the action required to meet these goals. We must now focus our energies on mobilizing the political determination - as well as the financial and, particularly, human resources - to translate consensus into effective policies and programmes. To set an example for the rest of the world, as we agreed to do at Cairo, we must begin at home. Member countries of the Council with significant hunger and malnutrition problems agreed to set feasible targets for themselves, formulate supporting policies and programmes and monitor progress, with the support of all those in a position to do so.

Challenges and opportunities emerging from a rapidly changing political and economic environment

8. We are concerned that the current and prospective medium-term economic situation does not support the developing countries' efforts to fight hunger. The world economic outlook for the early 1990s is less encouraging than a year ago. In Africa and Latin America, the longer-term trend of declining incomes per person continues. Even in Asia, the world's fastest growing region, average economic growth was only moderate compared to average growth rates in the 1980s. Many developing countries are caught up in the struggle with the chronic difficulties of heavy indebtedness, high inflation, deteriorating terms of trade and low food-production growth. At least 40 low- and middle-income developing countries are still struggling to recover from the severe losses incurred as a result of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. We urge donor countries to continue their extensive economic aid to adversely affected nations.

9. There are fears that the developments in Europe could have negative consequences for developing countries, by diverting resources, including development assistance and food aid. But developed countries emphasized the positive effects of stronger economies in Europe on developing countries and reaffirmed that resource flows to Eastern Europe are additional to those directed to the developing countries and would not limit the financial resources allocated for assistance programmes provided for the developing countries. In this connection, we emphasize that the unprecedented efforts of the developed countries in support of Eastern European reforms demonstrate the possibilities of international cooperation driven by strong political determination. It is most urgent for the developed countries to deploy an

effort of similar intensity for the benefit of the world's hungry people, paying special attention to the improvement of infrastructures, human resources and policy reforms.

10. Given the unprecedented demands on international economic assistance, the developed-country Council members commit themselves to maintain official development assistance (ODA) and to consider the possibility of increasing ODA flows to the developing countries.

11. At the same time, external assistance as well as domestic resources must be utilized more effectively. Significant progress can be achieved when both developing countries and donors give greater priority to meeting specific goals and targets for the alleviation of hunger, within the framework of generally more equity-oriented development. We request the secretariat to work with multilateral and bilateral aid institutions, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and non-governmental organizations on practical ways of doing so, and report to us at the next session. We also call on the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank to submit to our next session reports on their experience with activities focused on alleviating hunger and poverty, especially those directed at realizing the potential contribution to development by small farmers and women.

12. Many developing countries are also concerned that they may be "left out" in terms of access to markets in developed countries as Eastern European countries will increasingly compete in export markets for manufactures, raw materials and temperate-zone agricultural products. However, trade and cooperation opportunities for developing countries arising from the reform process and the strengthening of Eastern European economies should not be forgotten. A special effort is needed to promote cooperation between the countries of the East and the South and to facilitate access of developing countries to growing Eastern European markets. As the Council's contribution to this effort, we will seek to foster dialogue and cooperation on food-security related policy reforms between developing countries and Eastern European countries, complementary to our long-standing efforts in support of South-South cooperation.

<u>The importance of achieving a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round</u>

13. Last year, we instructed the secretariat to prepare a report for our current session on the food-security implications of the outcome of the multilateral agricultural trade negotiations in the Uruguay Round. These negotiations have yet to be concluded. There is no doubt that the current agricultural trade protectionism is the cause of great economic inefficiency and prevents developing countries from realizing their true economic potential. The Council has always emphasized that agricultural trade liberalization is in the long-term interest of all countries as it contributes to more efficient and stronger economies and helps strengthen food security in the long run. But there may be short-term negative effects, which could hurt low-income food-deficit countries. Proposals for addressing these potential negative effects, including proposals for a post-Uruguay Round food-aid regime, particularly strengthening the developmental role of food aid, have been discussed and should further be pursued in the course of the negotiations. It is urgent that negotiations be resumed as soon as possible

at the political level and brought to an early successful conclusion. We will send a message to this effect to the trade negotiators of the Uruguay Round.

Addressing the immediate needs of the poor people

14. The larger part of the 1990s could well become a period of transition for many countries - especially those in sub-Saharan Africa and others in the group of the least developed countries - during which development conditions could become worse before they turn better towards the end of the decade, when the effects of stronger economies in Eastern Europe and a strengthened, integrated Western European economy and of a successful outcome of the Uruguay Round would, together with other factors, contribute to improvements in the global economic situation.

15. Hungry people in the affected countries and elsewhere cannot wait for an upturn in the global economic fortunes. They have to eat now if they are to share in the benefits of improved economic growth and development in the future. A special effort is needed now.

Meeting the food-security challenges of developing countries in the 1990s and beyond

16. We have emphasized that food security is achieved by both adequate food supplies - including food production, imports and food aid - and access to food by all people. These two integral elements form the core of the Council's continuing agenda.

17. Within this framework, we called - last year - for an assessment of the need for "a renewal of the Green Revolution", to achieve major advances in the development, transfer and application of productivity-enhancing agricultural technology in developing countries, to meet the food needs of their growing populations in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century. Recognizing that decisions on the direction of research and investment to achieve it have to be made now in order to produce timely results to meet future needs, our President convened an expert consultation on this topic prior to the present session, at Cairo in April 1991.

18. The consultation considered the need for a new Green Revolution within a framework different from that of the first one. Based on advances in science and technology, it would firmly anchor in national and regional development strategies and explicitly support specific food-security objectives. It would require a better integration of technological research with socio-economic and policy research; it would include a broader coverage of plant and animal foods of importance to the world's hungry people; it would be based on more integrated technology systems linking research, extension and on-farm application and joining the efforts of public-sector institutions, farmers' organizations, universities and the private sector, and would make full use of traditional technologies, as well as the tools of modern biotechnology, and give emphasis to natural-resource management research. It should give attention to involving users in the development of research activities and the integration of sustainable agricultural considerations. There is a particular need for significantly greater emphasis on research and technology development for agriculture in arid areas, with priority to research in water conservation, application and use.

19. To respond to the challenges of the future, agriculture must be supported by effective and efficient agricultural research. A growing world population, necessary further betterment in the level of nutrition, especially of the underprivileged, and widespread expectations for lasting improvements in the standard of living, depend on the continued rise in agriculture's outputs and on increases of its productivity in the developing countries which need it. Progress in these areas must be accompanied by adequate natural-resource conservation and management, and by widespread protection of the environment.

20. Governments, donors and international research institutions, in particular the International Agricultural Research Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), are called on to support programmes to provide resources to strengthen on a sustainable basis agricultural research, especially in the developing countries. Specifically, we call on multilateral financial and development institutions and bilateral donors to provide increased and long-term support to agricultural research and technology, with commitments for periods of some 15 to 20 years replacing current projects of much shorter duration. We also request the secretariat to follow-up on other important recommendations of the consultation.

21. We emphasize that in many countries the reduction of hunger is linked to progress in economic growth and the resultant alleviation of poverty. Recent United Nations studies suggest that the population of poor countries is growing faster than economic growth resulting in declining incomes per capita. Efforts to reduce hunger and poverty will be of limited effect unless this economic growth occurs and national Governments deal decisively with the population problem.

22. In this connection, we had a preliminary examination of the possible consequences of major migration movements of people for the food security of developing countries and decided to place that item on the future agenda of the Council as an issue of increasing importance in the 1990s.

23. We are deeply concerned about the increasing deterioration of our natural resource base, which is jeopardizing the food security of future generations. The deterioration of the environment is linked to unsustainable development patterns in many countries, particularly in the developed ones. We also emphasize the interrelationship between efforts to address environmental problems and those directed at a more equitable international economic order.

Coordination among the Rome-based food agencies and strengthening the Council

24. In the context of our deliberations on the need for more effective coordination among United Nations agencies and programmes in the field of food security, we reiterate our support for the creation of an informal inter-secretariat consultative mechanism among the four Rome-based organizations and we welcome the continuing efforts of the Executive Director in this regard. In this connection, we considered the urgent need for the strengthening of these institutions, which are currently facing great financial difficulties, notably FAO, IFAD and WFP.

25. A number of suggestions were made concerning the strengthening and improved effectiveness of the World Food Council, and in that respect we

decided to ask the President to convene a consultation between regional representatives of member States on the issues contained in part two of the report, under "WFC work programme and other business", and other issues which might arise, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the functioning of the Council and to report to its eighteenth ministerial session.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD COUNCIL TO THE MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATORS OF THE URUGUAY ROUND

The Ministers of the United Nations World Food Council stress the high priority they attach to early progress in achieving a satisfactory outcome to the current Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

If hunger and malnutrition are to be addressed effectively, the international community and individual nations must create conditions that foster economic growth for rich and poor nations alike. To obtain this, an agreement to liberalize world agricultural trade within an overall GATT solution is crucial.

The lack of a conclusion in the Uruguay Round after five years of negotiations has a severe impact on world trade, especially the trade situation of the developing countries. The most disturbing aspect is the effect this has on poverty and food security in those countries.

The necessary agricultural reforms have been delayed too long - the 1980s were a troubling and difficult decade for the poor nations of the world. At the outset of the 1990s, it is imperative that they be given a fair opportunity to realize their full economic potential.

What is needed, therefore, is a comprehensive agreement which addresses the specific situation and needs of the developing world and which will ensure an international trade system which is open, just and equitable.

We urge you to come to a speedy and successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of negotiations of GATT.

PART TWO

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL

I. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. The seventeenth ministerial session of the World Food Council was held at Helsingør, Denmark, from 5 to 8 June 1991. It was opened by the Acting President of the Council, Mr. Andreas Gavrielides, Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources of Cyprus, in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark. A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was read by the Executive Director, Mr. Gerald Ion Trant. The Minister for Agriculture of Denmark, Mr. Laurits Tørnaes, delivered the inaugural address.

A. Membership of the Council

2. At the time of the session, the Council comprised the following 36 States: Argentina,** Australia,* Bangladesh,*** Bulgaria,*** Burundi,** Canada,*** Cape Verde,* China,*** Colombia,*** Cyprus,* Denmark,** Ecuador,* Egypt,** France,** Gambia,*** Germany,* Guatemala,* Hungary,** Iran, (Islamic Republic of),** Italy,** Japan,** Kenya,*** Lesotho,*** Mexico,*** Nepal,*** Niger,* Paraguay,* Peru,** Rwanda,** Syrian Arab Republic,* Turkey,*** Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,* United States of America,*** Yemen,** Yugoslavia,* Zimbabwe.*

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* Term of office expires on 31 December 1991.

** Term of office expires on 31 December 1992.

*** Term of office expires on 31 December 1993.

B. Attendance

3. The session was attended by the following member States of the Council: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mexico, Peru, Rwanda, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United States of America, Yemen, Yugoslavia, and Zimbabwe.

4. Observers from the following States non-members of the Council were present: Burkina Faso, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Finland, Gabon, Greece, Holy See, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zambia.

5. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: UNHCR, WFP, ILO, FAO, IMF and IFAD.

6. Observers from the following intergovernmental organizations were present: African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Council of the European Economic Community, Commission of the European Communities, and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

7. Observers from the following non-governmental organizations were also present: International Service for National Agricultural Research and Institute of Development Studies of the University of Sussex.

C. Officers

8. The following officer of the Council was present:

Vice-President: Mr. Andreas Gavrielides (Cyprus)

D. Agenda

9. The Council adopted the following agenda (WFC/1991/1) for the session:

1. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda.

2. "Food First" on the development agenda for the 1990s:

   (a) The global state of hunger and malnutrition;

   (b) The conquest of hunger in a changing political and economic environment;

   (c) Responses to developing countries' food production challenges.

3. WFC work programme and other business:

   (a) Future work programme;

   (b) Other business.

4. Election of the Bureau.

5. Report of the Council to the forty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

E. Documentation

10. The documents before the Council at its seventeenth session are listed in the annex to the present report.

II. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

A. Opening statements

11. In his welcoming statement to the delegates, the Minister for Agriculture of Denmark, Mr. Laurits Tørnaes, said it was an honour for his country to host this important assembly at a time when political decisions more than ever were shaping the fate of the world. He observed that the number of chronically hungry people was now more than 500 million and that the world faced a situation where population growth and food deficits would continue to rapidly increase. He stressed that the current changes in the world provided both opportunities and challenges for making a better world based on growth with equity. The greatest challenge of the Council today, he said, was to inspire the world community to fight hunger and malnutrition by way of an equity-based lasting growth.

12. The Acting President of the Council, Mr. Andreas Gavrielides, Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources of Cyprus, opened the seventeenth session in the absence of the President, Mr. Youssef Amin Wally. He expressed appreciation that the opening ceremony was honoured by the presence of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II, and he thanked the Government of Denmark for its generous hospitality to the World Food Council. He also noted the important role which Denmark played as an aid donor and an active participant in the field of international cooperation.

13. At its sixteenth session in 1990, Council Ministers had pointed out both the potential opportunities and risks which political and economic developments in Europe and elsewhere presented for the fight against hunger. The Acting President noted that the unprecedented efforts of the developed countries in support of Eastern European reforms demonstrated the possibilities for international cooperation when it was accompanied by strong political determination. It was not too much to ask, he said, for a similar effort in support of the world's hungry people.

14. The global hunger and malnutrition situation was further deteriorating and famine threatened some 45 million people - 30 million of them in Africa - with starvation. The economic outlook for the early 1990s suggested that the fight against hunger might become more difficult in many parts of the world in the years to come.

15. The Acting President observed, however, that there had been a growing commitment by countries to focus their development efforts more sharply on the problems of hunger. The Council had taken the lead in formulating in 1989 four hunger-alleviation goals for the 1990s and the General Assembly subsequently, in December of last year, had incorporated those goals into the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. 2/ The major task of the seventeenth session, the Acting President stressed, was to see how the Council could move towards the implementation of those goals.

16. In a message read on his behalf by the Executive Director of the World Food Council, the Secretary-General of the United Nations observed that when the Council met in 1990, it had been hoped that the end of the Cold War would

lead to a new era of peace and stability, enabling nations to focus their energies on pressing social, economic and environmental problems. Since then, events had dampened those hopes. There was a threat of continued economic deterioration for low-income countries, with the real danger that many countries could be further marginalized in the short term.

17. In the present difficult transition period, he said, the World Food Council, as the United Nations body focusing on hunger problems, must work energetically to revitalize the political momentum in the fight against hunger. In the Cairo Declaration, 1/ the Council set four goals for the reduction of hunger and malnutrition which had become an integral part of the International Development Strategy for the 1990s. He looked forward to the Council's contribution to the implementation of the new Strategy.

18. As the international community moved to a new era of international cooperation, the Secretary-General said, the United Nations must be able to respond more effectively to changing needs. The World Food Council would contribute to that process by strengthening the capacity of the United Nations in identifying emerging food-security risks and charting a course of early corrective action.

19. In a statement to the Council, Mr. H. O. A. Kjeldsen, President of the Danish Agricultural Council and the President of International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), observed that most of the hungry people in the world were farmers in developing countries, who needed help to increase food production. From his experience as a farmer, he considered four policy requirements essential for more food production: official recognition by the Government of the value of agriculture to the economic and social progress of the nation; access to resources, especially credit, on reasonable terms; a competitive input supply sector, marketing system and infrastructure; good consultative procedures between representative farmers' organizations and the Government.

20. In conclusion, Mr. Kjeldsen stressed that the long-term solution to the problem of world hunger depended on the commitment of Governments to the farm sector. Quoting from the address of the IFAP President to the World Food Conference in 1974, he said that farmer security was the key to food security.

B. General debate

21. The First Under-Secretary of State for Land Reclamation and Agricultural Foreign Relations of Egypt, Mr. Adel El Beltagy, speaking on behalf of the President, Mr. Youssef Amin Wally, introduced the general debate, by stating that the political, social and economic changes taking place in the world presented both opportunities and risks for countries in their development efforts and their struggle against hunger and poverty. The Council, he said, was there to assess the implications of those events and to discuss practical ways to fully seize whatever opportunities there may be and to avert any potential negative consequences for the poor and hungry. Most importantly, the Council must reaffirm, in rapidly changing and difficult times, the primacy of food and hunger issues on the global agenda for the 1990s.

22. The sixteenth session of the World Food Council had demonstrated that there was broad consensus on the thrust of the policies required to meet the goals of the Cairo Declaration. Now, member countries with significant hunger and malnutrition problems must look at their own policies, set feasible targets and formulate supporting programmes to achieve them.

23. While responding to current challenges, the food security and well-being of future generations must be addressed at the same time. The Council must ensure that the world will adequately feed all of its 8 billion people expected early in the next century.

24. A central concern of the assessments before the Council, the President's message stated, was the risk of a further marginalization of poor countries and their peoples. This could be a period of transition for many countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa and others in the group of the least developed countries. Development conditions could become worse before they turned better towards the end of the decade when the effects of stronger economies in Eastern Europe and a strengthened Western European economy would, together with other factors, contribute to improvements in the global economic situation.

25. In the debate, many Ministers noted that recent important and even dramatic political and economic developments threatened to draw attention away from the long-standing problems of hunger and poverty. They considered it of utmost importance that the World Food Council continue its efforts to renew the political commitment of all nations to eradicate hunger in the world.

1. "Food First" on the development agenda for the 1990s

(Agenda item 2)

26. The documentation before Ministers indicated that the prospects for food security in the 1990s would be influenced by great political and economic changes in the world, including those taking place in Western and Eastern Europe and the outcome of the multilateral trade negotiations in GATT. Those changes must not be allowed to distract the world's attention from the "silent crisis" of hunger. They constituted a challenge for the development of policies which captured their positive effects and protected the world's poor and hungry against their negative consequences.

27. The President of IFAD addressed the Council and provided information on the activities and policies of the Fund, emphasizing the need to harness the underutilized capacity of small and marginal farmers, the landless and rural women as engines for self-reliant development. He reported that the Governing Council of IFAD had endorsed the proposal to continue the Special Programme for Africa in a second phase and appealed to all members, in a position to do so, to contribute generously to it. The President also made some specific suggestions to strengthen further the coordination among the Rome-based food organizations. He said that in response to the World Food Council's recommendation that IFAD report to it on the results of its operations, the Fund would be publishing, later in the year, a major study on rural poverty.

(a) The global state of hunger and malnutrition - 1991 report

(Agenda item 2 (a); WFC/1991/2)

28. As was their custom since the thirteenth session in Beijing, the Ministers began the session with a review of the current and prospective hunger situation, as outlined in the document before them. Despite a record cereal harvest last year, the food-security situation had deteriorated in many countries, especially in Africa and Latin America. With stocks still at a relatively low level, the short-term global food security situation would depend on the 1991 harvests. The longer-term food-security outlook for the poor in developing countries was, however, even more worrisome.

29. Ministers expressed sympathy to the Government and people of Bangladesh over the tragedy of the cyclone which had devastated so much of that country in recent weeks.

30. The representative of FAO provided an overview of the current global food-security situation. She also reported on the Conference on Agriculture and the Environment, convened by FAO and the Government of the Netherlands in April 1991, which discussed the essential goals of a strategy for sustainable agriculture and rural development. FAO's own action programmes in that area, as well as its views on development and emergency assistance, were outlined for the Council.

31. Ministers noted that despite all efforts made, the problem of hunger and poverty was still growing. Famine was affecting some 45 million people, most of them in Africa. Much larger numbers of people were chronically hungry, surpassing 500 million, most of them in rural areas. Despite tremendous scientific and technical advances and impressive economic progress, some 1 billion people - the equivalent of the total population of the world 200 years ago - were suffering from some form of food insecurity and malnutrition. Of special concern was the situation of about 175 million malnourished children, of which 40,000 were dying every day from preventable malnutrition-related diseases.

32. Prospects for the future, it was felt, held the very real possibility that present trends might worsen, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of chronically hungry people would very likely substantially increase during the current decade. Many countries in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean were affected by continuing downward trends in per capita income and the risk of a further deterioration in food-security levels was therefore high. The prevailing world economic situation and outlook made it difficult, it was said, to achieve a substantial reduction in hunger and poverty by the year 2000.

33. Against that background, the commitment by Governments to alleviating poverty and hunger as manifested in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, 2/ adopted at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, was an encouraging sign, particularly as the Strategy included as a central concept the four goals of the Cairo Declaration aimed at alleviating hunger. In that connection, it was proposed that the Council, at the present session, shoud agree on national and international measures aimed at implementing the Strategy for the next decade.

34. There was agreement among Ministers that the role of women as agents of development was very important. Delegates suggested that the role of women was pivotal in agricultural and rural development. And yet women were still not being adequately accommodated in agricultural programmes. Since they participated significantly in the production, processing and marketing of foodstuffs, it was necessary to improve their access to technology, credit, land and inputs. That was especially important in order that they might contribute to food security, particularly at the household level.

35. Ministers discussed Africa's food problems and the elements which hampered food production, including civil strife, lack of financial resources, rapid population increases which mitigated the positive effects of overall increased food production, the relative instability of African agriculture affected by sharp weather-induced changes, including erratic rainfall and drought. It was suggested that Africa had a resource in its fishing industry which had hardly been exploited. Food production largely hinged on small farmers, many of them women. A major bottleneck to improve the situation was the general inability of Governments to formulate consistent policies and to implement them flexibly. Moreover, the issue of access to food was also very important in Africa. It was said that, even in those countries where average food availability was sufficient, part of the population suffered from hunger and malnutrition.

(b) The conquest of hunger in a changing political and economic environment

(Agenda item 2 (b); WFC/1991/3, WFC/1991/4 and WFC/1991/5)

36. In addressing the item, documents before the Council indicated that the prospects for food security in the 1990s would be affected by great political and economic changes in the world, including those taking place in Western and Eastern Europe and recent developments in Western Asia, and the outcome of the multilateral trade negotiations in GATT. Additionally, the Council had before it an assessment of progress made in focusing development assistance more sharply on hunger and poverty alleviation.

(i) Responding to the food security implications of the changes in the political and economic environment

37. In his statement, the President said that, in setting their own targets to reduce hunger, many countries would be sorely aware of the limits imposed by increasing economic difficulties. The current and prospective medium-term world economic situation was not conducive to early progress in the fight against hunger, and was influenced by major developments, including those in Eastern and Western Europe and the consequences of the situation in the Gulf.

38. It was also necessary, he said, to address the increasing concerns of developing countries that they may be "left out" not only in terms of diminishing shares of development assistance but also in terms of access to markets in developed countries. However, opportunities for trade and cooperation for developing countries arising from the reform process and strengthening of the Eastern European economies should not be forgotten.

39. In their discussion, some delegations observed that with the new cooperative spirit between the Super-Powers, the international community had entered into a fruitful phase of collaboration The hope was expressed that the reduction of military expenditures would bring about an improvement in the international economic environment.

40. At the same time, delegations expressed concern that the war in the Gulf had imposed serious hardships on countries and people around the world. The war introduced negative effects on those countries which had lost substantial remittances from emigrants and were forced to absorb returning citizens and which were deprived of export earnings, and on those countries of the area providing relief to displaced persons. At the same time, international cooperation in response to the Gulf crisis was evidence of the effectiveness of efforts fuelled by political will.

41. A number of delegates concurred with the view expressed in the documents that, after years of stagnation and economic decline in many countries, the present world economic environment and outlook was still not conducive to accelerated growth in developing countries. That could particularly jeopardize efforts to improve the hunger and poverty situation in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Those members emphasized the urgent need for policy measures to revitalize the economies of those developing countries.

42. The Eastern European member countries pointed out that their countries were still in the middle of difficult processes of political and economic reforms. The possibility existed of short-term negative effects for developing countries. However, optimism prevailed that, particularly in the long run, the greater strength of the Eastern European economies would also benefit the developing countries. In the meantime, the recently created institutions supporting Eastern Europe would in all their actions explicitly take the interests of developing countries into account.

43. It was acknowledged that the impact on developing countries of the Single European Market project was still uncertain. However, faster economic growth in Europe would benefit developing countries. The EEC was convinced that the Single Market would also benefit the Lomé-partners, because aid to developing countries would continue, preferential treatment would not be changed and no new trade barriers would be erected. Possible specific problems related to individual commodities would be solved on an ad hoc basis.

(ii) The consequences for food security of the multilateral trade negotiations in the Uruguay Round

44. In his statement, the President reminded the Council that agricultural trade protectionism was the cause of immense economic inefficiency. That indicated that agricultural trade liberalization, also strengthening long-term food security, was in the interest of all countries. There might, however, be short-term negative effects in terms of higher food import bills, which would hurt low-income food-deficit countries. Proposals to address potential negative effects had been tabled in the Uruguay Round and should further be pursued in the ongoing negotiations. The President stressed, however, that there was above all a need for a renewed commitment to bring the Uruguay Round to a successful conclusion without further delay.

45. In the debate, delegates highlighted the harmful effects on both developed and developing countries of the prevailing international agricultural trade regime. The annual costs in OECD countries were estimated at $300 billion, and it was mentioned that the lost earnings to farmers in developing countries had been estimated at $26 billion per year. In addition, subsidized food exports were also negatively affecting the interests of farmers, food self-reliance and the sustainability of agriculture in developing countries. The harmful effects of lack of market access for developing countries and of subsidized exports discouraging food production, were particularly emphasized.

46. The Ministers unanimously stressed the need to bring the Uruguay Round expeditiously to a successful conclusion. Most members were of the opinion that agriculture was of key importance to the Round. Several other members, however, emphasized that advance in all areas of the negotiations was needed to arrive at a balanced outcome.

47. Bringing agriculture under GATT rules and creating open global markets would be in the interest of all countries. That would require discipline in the areas of internal support, market access, export subsidies and phytosanitary regulations. One developed member country, however, stressed the need for each country to maintain the capability to produce its basic foodstuffs, but said that this would also allow for substantial imports of many food items.

48. Developed member countries recognized that special consideration had to be given in the negotiations to the interest of food-deficit low-income countries. Efforts further to develop agriculture called for flexibility in the agreed reduction of protection in those countries. Some Ministers also indicated that in order to avoid short-term hardship due to possibly resulting higher food import prices, arrangements for more additional food aid should be considered in the negotiations. One developing member country considered it important that preferential treatment of developing countries be maintained.

49. Ministers decided to send a message to the multilateral trade negotiators of the Uruguay Round to stress the high priority they attach to early progress in achieving a satisfactory outcome to the current Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

(iii) Focusing development assistance on hunger and poverty alleviation

50. Addressing development assistance in his statement, the President emphasized that at a time of unprecedented demands on international economic assistance, Council members from developed countries should commit themselves not only to maintaining growth trends in development assistance but also to achieving a substantial increase over and above the trend of the past decade. But significant progress could only be achieved when both developing countries and donors give greater priority to meeting specific goals and targets for alleviating hunger. He suggested that the Ministers discuss practical ways of doing so.

51. The representative of the World Food Programme reported to the session on WFP activities and on the meeting of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) which had just ended. He said that CFA had had a first

substantive debate at its recent session on the important and complex subject of food aid and the role of WFP in the 1990s. Within that discussion CFA had also reviewed the International Emergency Food Reserve and measures needed to improve its functioning and resource situation.

52. In the debate, many delegates from developing countries stressed the need for increasing levels of development assistance and more generous debt relief. The developed-country members were reminded of the commitments they had made at Cairo and Bangkok. And some countries expressed concern that the extraordinary efforts of the OECD countries to support Eastern Europe might divert ODA sources away from them. However, the EEC countries assured them that their support to Eastern Europe would be additional to their assistance to developing countries.

53. Some developing countries underlined that commercial and political considerations in bilateral aid reduced its effectiveness to reach the poor. Several other countries stressed the importance of a greater focus on hunger of aid policies by improving the implementation process, by increasing the flexibility in the use of aid and by incorporating the four goals adopted at Cairo in the assistance programmes of donors.

54. Two major donor countries highlighted their ongoing efforts to increase substantially the volume of their ODA and some donors also mentioned their recent initiatives to enhance debt relief.

55. Ministers of developed member countries recognized the need for a constant re-examination of the focus on hunger and poverty alleviation in their development cooperation programmes. In this context, they mentioned their ongoing efforts to improve the quality of food aid, higher priority for agricultural and rural development, development of human resources, protection of the environment and increased attention to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa and to the least developed countries. One donor country reported on a recent thorough examination which found that aid had a special role to play in ensuring that economic growth reached the poor through targeting and income transfers. On the part of developing countries, appreciation was expressed for the continuing efforts to focus aid more sharply on the alleviation of hunger and poverty.

(c) Responses to developing countries' food production challenges

(Agenda item 2 (c); WFC/1991/6 and WFC/1991/7)

56. In his introductory statement, the President emphasized that the achievement of food security through adequate food supplies and access to these supplies formed the core of the Council's continuing agenda. The President recalled that the Council the previous year had called for a renewal of the Green Revolution, which would bring about major advances in the development, transfer and application of productivity-enhancing agricultural technology in developing countries to meet the food needs of their growing populations in the 1990s and beyond. He then referred to the conclusions and recommendations of an Expert Consultation which he had convened at Cairo in April 1991 on that topic and which were before the Council for consideration.

57. The consultations concluded that there was a need for a renewal of the Green Revolution which would take into account the limitations of the first one. The consultation considered it important for multilateral financial and development institutions and bilateral donors to increase long-term support to agricultural research and technology, with commitments for periods of some 15 to 20 years replacing current projects of much shorter duration.

58. During the general debate, Ministers stressed the urgency of maintaining and accelerating food-production growth in the developing regions. They observed, however, that the first Green Revolution had had only a limited impact in Latin America and had largely bypassed Africa. The first Green Revolution had also concentrated on a limited number of major cereals cultivated on irrigated land. A second Green Revolution instead called for sustained, long-term research to develop technologies that would cover a wider range of food crops, livestock and agro-ecological zones.

59. An integrated approach to research was needed which linked productivity-enhancing research with natural resources management, farming systems and socio-economic policy research and environment sustainability. It was also important for developing countries to choose their research priorities more carefully, establish more effective technology transfer and extension structures and evolve efficient mechanisms for cooperation in research and technology development and transfer between and within regions.

60. The Ministers heard a statement by the representative of ILO, who reported on the issues before the session of the International Labour Conference which was taking place at the same time. In an action complementary to the present session of WFC, the Conference of ILO was addressing the role and impact of modern agricultural technology. The discussion of that issue would enable ILO and its member countries to address the dilemmas of mechanization and to focus more precisely on the potential offered for biotechnology to alleviate poverty and raise living standards. Thus, the resources of employers' and workers' organizations would be brought into play, a vital step if the next advance was to be a social and not merely a technological one.

61. The Ministers underlined the role which improved marketing and distribution infrastructure, storage, processing, credit, skilled manpower and incentive policies could play along with improved technology in the attainment of food security. Given the immense contribution of small farmers and particularly women to food production and household food security in the developing countries, it was important for them to be adequately accommodated in the agricultural and research policies and programmes of developing countries.

62. The need to preserve the agricultural-resource base was repeatedly stressed. Ministers emphasized that the achievement of food-production growth and food security should not be at the expense of the environment. In that connection, Ministers underscored the need for natural resource conservation and environmental protection especially of arable lands, fauna, flora and fisheries resources through the adoption of efficient management, good agricultural practices and use of non-toxic inputs.

63. The challenge of maintaining an ecological balance was addressed to developed and developing countries alike. The satisfaction of present needs, Minsters said, should fully respect the requirement of future generations. Specifically, it was emphasized that the continued destruction of the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect would have a considerable impact on agricultural production.

2. WFC work programme and other business

(Agenda item 3)

64. The Minister for Agriculture of Denmark presented a proposal to place on the agenda of WFC the topic of migration, a topic his Government considered was closely linked to food security. The magnitude of the problem was not fully known today, he said, and the risk of large and accelerated migration might constitute one of the largest challenges to that generation. Migration had an influence on the food-security situation of countries and on the development process in general. The proposal by Denmark was accepted by the Council.

65. In view of the Council's decision that a special effort was needed to promote cooperation between the countries of the East and the South, the First Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Committee of the Soviet Union extended an invitation to the World Food Council to hold in Moscow later in 1991 a regional consultation on meeting food-security issues in Europe, which would include the participation of developing countries.

66. A number of suggestions were made concerning the strengthening and improved effectiveness of the World Food Council. These included suggestions: (a) to shorten the agenda for the ministerial sessions and provide secretariat background information in such a way as to better facilitate the exchange of views and discussion among Ministers; (b) to provide assessment and follow-up of ministerial decisions and recommendations, with special attention to practical ways and means of removing the obstacles to eradicating hunger and malnutrition; (c) to request and make greater use of reports from other intergovernmental bodies which pursue similar objectives; (d) to consider using, within available resources, expert groups to report to WFC on special issues; (e) to keep under review the possible opportunities for strengthening and improving the role and functioning of WFC, within the context of the ongoing revitalization exercise of the United Nations system in the economic and social sectors; and to consider in the future the possibility of holding biennial ministerial sessions.

67. The Council received with appreciation the invitation of the Government of Kenya to host its eighteenth ministerial session at Nairobi.

3. Election of the Bureau

(Agenda item 4)

68. The Council elected its Bureau for a two-year term by acclamation:

President:	Mr. Issa Kalantari Minister for Agriculture (Islamic Republic of Iran)
Vice-Presidents:	Mr. Elijah W. Mwangale Minister for Agriculture (Kenya)
	Mr. Carlos Torres Manzo National Coordinator, National Food Commission (Mexico)
	Mr. B. M. Volodin First Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Committee (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
	Mr. Lutfullah Kayalar Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs (Turkey)

69. Warm tributes were paid to the retiring President, Mr. Youssef Amin Wally, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt, and the other members of the Bureau and to the Acting President, Mr. Andreas Gavrielides, Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources of Cyprus, for his excellent presidency.

III. REPORT OF THE COUNCIL TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A. Organization of work

70. The Council met four times in plenary session. Its conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly were prepared by a drafting group consisting of two representatives from each regional group, and were adopted by acclamation in the plenary. The members of the drafting group were: Argentina, Australia, Denmark, Hungary, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Rwanda and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

B. Expression of gratitude to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Denmark

71. The following expression of gratitude to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Denmark was adopted:

The World Food Council,

Having convened its seventeenth ministerial session at Helsingør, Denmark, from 5 to 8 June 1991, at the kind invitation of the Kingdom of Denmark,

1. Expresses its deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Denmark for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to all Ministers, plenipotentiaries and other representatives and observers participating in the session;

2. Applauds the Government and people of the Kingdom of Denmark for the excellent conference facilities and other arrangements provided to all participants;

3. Requests the President of the Council to express, on behalf of all the members and observers participating in the session, its deep gratitude to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Denmark.

72. Representatives of the five regional groups paid warm tribute to Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II and to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Denmark for their generous hospitality in hosting the session.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 19 (A/44/19), part one.

2/ General Assembly resolution 45/199, annex.

ANNEX

List of documents before the Council at its seventeenth ministerial session

Document No.	Agenda item	Title
WFC/1991/1	1	Provisional agenda with annotations
WFC/1991/2	2 (a)	Hunger and malnutrition in the world: situation and outlook - 1991 report
WFC/1991/3	2 (b)	Food-security implications of the changes in the political and economic environment
WFC/1991/4	2 (b)	The consequences for food security of the multilateral trade negotiations in the Uruguay Round
WFC/1991/5	2 (b)	Focusing development assistance on hunger- and poverty-alleviation
WFC/1991/6	2 (c)	Meeting the developing countries' food production challenges of the 1990s and beyond - Synthesis of the regional overviews of food-security focused agricultural research, technology transfer and application
WFC/1991/6/Add.1	2 (c)	Meeting the developing countries' food production challenges of the 1990s and beyond - Summary report of the WFC/UNDP Interregional Consultation, Cairo, Egypt, 22 to 24 April 1991
WFC/1991/7	2 (c)	Draft message from the Ministers of the World Food Council to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
WFC/1991/8		Current world food situation
WFC/1991/9		Report on the sixteenth session of the Committee on World Food Security
WFC/1991/10		Report of the thirty-first session of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes

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